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SUBJECT: Buenos Aires Inaugural Reception Attracts Argentine Elite, Garners Broad Media Coverage

¶1. SUMMARY: An Inauguration Reception held at Ambassador Wayne's residence in Buenos Aires on January 20 brought substantial praise from both participants and the Argentine press. The over 200 key Argentine contacts attending the event in the midst of summer holidays; thus were treated to a PowerPoint presentation by IO Mara Tekach on the transition, remarks by Ambassador Wayne focusing on U.S.-Argentine relations in the President Obama era. Via a number of big screen TVs, they viewed the inauguration of the new President. The event reached millions of Argentines through news programs and articles produced by the invited media. END SUMMARY.

¶2. The 2009 Inauguration Event began with a PowerPoint presentation on Transition in Foreign Policy by IO Mara Tekach based on the IIP-produced PowerPoint but with a number of relevant edits. The audience was reminded throughout the presentation that although expectations for President Obama are high, change will take time. Ambassador Wayne then gave remarks focusing on the high quality of President Obama's new national security and international affairs team, the President's desire to work well and closely with other countries and his desire to influence relations with the Americas in general; naming Argentina in particular as a country that could make an important contribution to the Summit of the Americas. Quoting President Obama, Ambassador Wayne emphasized that what is good for the peoples of Latin America is good for the U.S. Following Ambassador Wayne's remarks, the audience raptly watched the entire inaugural program in Spanish on large movie and plasma screens. They applauded loudly when President Obama was sworn in, and listened to his televised inaugural address silently and attentively. The applause following his speech was enthusiastic.

¶3. A notable selection of over 200 Argentine contacts of all embassy sections attended the event, leaving standing room only. Commentators noted that the turnout was excellent given Argentina is in the midst of summer holidays. Among the guests were the Secretary of Energy Daniel Cameron and Vice Foreign Minister Victorio Taccetti; leading opposition politicians Ricardo Lopez Murphy, congressional Deputy Patricia Bullrich, and Deputy Esteban Bullrich; former Argentine Ambassadors Eduardo Amadeo, Emilio Cardenas, and Diego Guelar; Deputy Mayor of City of Buenos Aires Gabriela Michetti; Vice President of the Central Bank Miguel Angel Pesce; Director of the Argentine Investment Promotion Agency Beatriz Nofal; numerous Argentine businessmen and civil society leaders; and select foreign ambassadors to Argentina.

¶4. Both the broadcast and print media showed great interest in covering the event, which they thought would be a perfect complement as "local flavor" for footage coming from Washington. Six television stations - four cable news networks, two broadcast stations - covered the reception; four of them going on air live as the Ambassador made his pre-inauguration speech remarks and later as the Ambassador took questions after the President's address. The event was timed for Ambassador Wayne to give his speech and take press questions right before and after President Obama's address in order to take advantage of peak Inauguration Day coverage viewership. The total audience these stations reached is estimated at 15 million. Viewership ratings, one station reported, tripled

their normal average during the peak moments of the inauguration. State-run Channel 7 - the only to reach the four corners of the country - aired Ambassador Wayne's remarks on three occasions, including on their prime-time evening newscast.

¶5. Most leading Buenos Aires-based newspapers carried prominent stories on the Inauguration reception: Pieces ran in the dailies Clarin, La Nacion, El Cronista Comercial, Critica, The Buenos Aires Herald, La Prensa, Ambito Financiero, BAE, Cronica and Diario Popular. All stories highlight the cheerful and hopeful atmosphere of the reception and the Ambassador's main message that "a new chapter" now opens for relations between Argentina and the U.S. and that Obama's speech was "a message of peace and cooperation." Picked up by news agencies, his words were also repeated on radio throughout the day. The press stories also noted the strong attendance in the event, even in the middle of the summer holiday season. Total readership of these newspapers is estimated at some 2 million people.

¶6. The January 20th Inauguration Event at Ambassador Wayne's residence was designed to take advantage of this very unique opportunity to communicate with the Argentine public and amplify highly positive public diplomacy conditions. It was part of the Embassy's larger outreach program. The approach was confirmed in many ways. Guests commented that they were honored to be invited to share this historic event with the American community. The turnout was far greater than anticipated - twice as many guests attended as was predicted, given that January is the summer vacation period for almost all Argentines. One guest flew down from his vacation in the far northern city of Salta solely to attend the event.

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